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REPORTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES: ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS

Draft resolution submitted by the Vice-President of the Council, Mr. Anwarul Karim Chowdhury (Bangladesh), as a result of informal consultations

Establishment of an ad hoc open-ended Intergovernmental Forum on Forests

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling its decision 1995/226, approving the establishment of an open-ended ad hoc intergovernmental panel on forests to pursue consensus and formulate coordinated proposals for action towards the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests,

Recognizing that the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests is a crucial factor in economic and social development, in environmental protection and in the Planet's life-support system,

Taking into account the decision taken by the General Assembly, at its nineteenth special session, held from 23 to 28 June 1997, to continue the intergovernmental policy dialogue on forests through the establishment of an ad hoc open-ended Intergovernmental Forum on Forests under the aegis of the Commission on Sustainable Development to work in an open, transparent and participatory manner, with a focused and time-limited mandate, charged with, inter alia, (a) promoting and facilitating the implementation of the proposals

for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests; (b) reviewing, monitoring and reporting on progress in the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests; and (c) considering matters left pending with regard to the programme elements of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, in particular trade and environment in relation to forest products and services, transfer of technology and the need for financial resources,

Also taking into account the decision of the General Assembly at its nineteenth special session that (a) the Forum should identify the possible elements of and work towards consensus on international arrangements and mechanisms, for example, a legally binding instrument on all types of forests, and would report on its work to the Commission on Sustainable Development in 1999; (b) based on that report and depending on the decision of the Commission at its eighth session, the Forum would engage in further action on establishing an intergovernmental negotiation process on new arrangements and mechanisms or a legally binding instrument on all types of forests; (c) the Forum should convene as soon as possible to further elaborate its terms of reference and decide on organizational matters; and (d) the Forum should be serviced by a small secretariat within the Department for Economic and Social Affairs, supported by voluntary extrabudgetary contributions from Governments and international organizations,

1. Decides to establish, under the aegis of the Commission on Sustainable Development, an ad hoc, open-ended Intergovernmental Forum on Forests as envisaged above;

2. Decides also that the Forum should hold its first organizational session in New York, from 1 to 3 October 1997 so that the preparations for substantive sessions can start without delay;

3. Decides further that the Forum should hold three substantive sessions and submit its report to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eighth session in 2000;

4. Recommends that the Forum at its first session should schedule its work programme and decide on the modalities of its work, including the election and designation of officers as well as the duration of its substantive sessions, which could be up to two weeks each, and recognizing

the wide range of issues to be addressed, decided that the Forum may consider dividing its work between in-session working groups, on the understanding that no more than two working groups would meet simultaneously;

5. Decides that the Forum should be serviced by a small secretariat within the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development, supported by voluntary extrabudgetary contributions from Governments and international organizations, that the operation of the Forum will require funding to support activities as well as meetings and participation by representatives of developing countries and major groups from developing countries, and that the participation of major groups should be in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Commission; in this regard, the following sources of funding should be considered: (a) voluntary extrabudgetary contributions from Governments and international organizations to support the work of the Forum; (b) secondments from international organizations; and (c) in-kind contributions from countries and international organizations, including the hosting of meetings;

6. Encourages interested Governments and organizations to make early voluntary contributions to ensure that the work of the Forum starts quickly;

7. Recommends that support from the United Nations system should, as far as possible, be derived from the reallocation of resources within existing budgets of United Nations bodies in order to respond to high-priority activities.